

whether he will be able to afford his next urologist appointment and what will happen if he can no longer pay for his depression medication.

Now, Paul told us that this was the first time that he publicly announced his medical conditions because he wants people to see the human face on the problem of the ACA repeal. He wants people to know that the ACA is keeping people alive.

Over 20 million people now depend on the ACA. They are not empty numbers. They are real people who deserve affordable, quality health coverage. ACA repeal would strip them of this coverage and make it impossible for them to get the care they rightly need.

Democrats will continue to stand our ground on the ACA, and we will continue to stand up for people who depend on the law, like Paul. We will refuse to make America sick again and create chaos in our Nation's healthcare system.

DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, for the past several days, this morning during our morning-hour debate, I have been listening to my colleagues across the aisle talking about the dire consequences the repeal of ObamaCare will have. Well, I have got to tell you something. It is already having dire consequences. The law itself is having dire consequences.

Americans like my constituent Dotty Legg from Victoria, Texas, wrote to my office with a desperate plea to get relief from the effects of ObamaCare. In 2012, Dotty's coverage was around \$400 a month with a \$2,500 deductible. In 2014, it went up to almost \$600. In 2015, \$700 a month, and that is coverage for just one person.

Well, in 2016, Dotty's carrier told her they could no longer cover her, so she had to go somewhere else. She went to another carrier and they only had an option that was almost \$700 a month, and her deductible skyrocketed to \$6,500. That is pretty unaffordable for something called the Affordable Care Act.

I have got to tell you, back before ObamaCare, back before the Affordable Care Act, a policy with a \$6,500 deductible would have been one of the least expensive policies you could have bought. It would have been a catastrophic policy. We have got to fix this.

It gets even worse. We don't see what goes on in 2017. The company is pulling out. Dotty can't find coverage at all.

The Affordable Care Act is not affordable, and it is full of broken promises. Most of the promises made were broken with Dotty. If you like your doctor, you can keep them. She hasn't been able to keep her doctor. Prices are going to go down? Come on. If you like your policy, you are going to keep it. Didn't happen.

We have got to fix this, and Republicans have a plan. We are going to work the plan. It is at better.gop. It is one of those new top-level domains, better.gop. We have got to fix it because ObamaCare is nothing but, as we say on the Internet, a big old #fail.

SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about our military spouses.

We often overlook the tremendous sacrifice our military spouses make to support their husbands and wives. They often move far from home and family to be with their spouse on military orders, but they give up their friends, the comfort of home, and even some of their Second Amendment rights.

The Gun Control Act of 1968 limits citizens' rights to purchase a handgun by requiring that it only be bought in the State where they are considered residents. Exceptions were made for Active-Duty military members but not their spouses; and that is why I have introduced H.R. 256, the Protect Our Military Families' Second Amendment Rights Act, which allows spouses of Active-Duty servicemembers to purchase firearms in the State where they live under their spouse's military orders.

Military spouses should not be denied their Second Amendment rights because they choose to live with their husband or wife while they are deployed. Spouses have the right to defend themselves and their families, just like everyone else. While I believe we must continue to push for things like constitutional carry, H.R. 256 is a good step in ensuring Second Amendment rights are respected.

□ 1030

CONGRATULATING COACH JASON HERRING AND THE REFUGIO BOBCATS

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note, I would also like to congratulate Coach Jason Herring and the Refugio Bobcats football team for winning their fourth Texas State AA championship.

The Bobcats had a 15-1 record this school year and defeated Crawford in the championship game 23-20 in an impressive game-winning 15-yard field goal by kicker Diego Gonzalez with only 8 seconds remaining.

Quarterback Jacobe Avery was the championship game's offensive MVP, and linebacker Kobie Herring was named defensive MVP. This was an impressive year for the whole team.

Winning is a Bobcat tradition. Congratulations, Refugio Bobcats.

EXPANDING MEDICARE COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, since its implementation in 1965, Medicare has excluded coverage for hearing aids and related audiology services,

routine dental care, and routine eye exams and eyeglasses despite the fact that large numbers of older Americans need these essential items and services. Today, with well over 100 original cosponsors, I will be introducing the Seniors Have Eyes, Ears, and Teeth bill, which will lift these terribly unfair restrictions on the population most in need of these services.

We know that hearing loss affects more than 40 percent of persons over 60 years old, more than 60 percent of those over 70, and almost 80 percent of those over 80 years of age. Yet, sadly, only one in five seniors currently diagnosed with hearing issues uses a hearing aid, which can range in cost from \$1,000 to \$6,000. For the more than half of Medicare beneficiaries who live on incomes below \$24,150 per year, these high, out-of-pocket expenses are out of their reach.

We also know seniors account for approximately 80 percent of the 2.8 million Americans with low vision. Routine eye exams for these seniors can cost from \$50 to \$300 or more, and the average cost for a pair of prescription glasses is \$196.

Mr. Speaker, it is increasingly well documented that untreated vision and hearing loss not only diminishes quality of life, but also increases the risk for costly health outcomes such as falls and resulting disability, depression, and dementia. Also tragic is that nearly 70 percent of older Americans currently have no form of dental insurance. This lack of insurance has been identified as the major barrier to accessing dental care for seniors. It is a well-known fact that neglect of oral health can result in the deterioration of overall physical health and that the lack of access to even routine dental exams and cleanings can exacerbate serious and complicated overall health problems that increase with age.

Expanding Medicare to cover vision, dental, and hearing services is a cost-effective intervention because it will prevent healthcare costs due to accidents, falls, cognitive impairments and increases in chronic conditions and oral cancer. But most importantly, giving our seniors the gift of hearing, vision, and oral health will go a long way toward helping our seniors enjoy their golden years free from depression and social isolation.

Mr. Speaker, few bills are ever introduced with this overwhelming support. Additionally, it has the strong support from the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. I invite my colleagues to join me and the over 100 original cosponsors of this legislation in supporting dental, vision, and hearing care for our seniors.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE
SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE,
Washington, DC, January 11, 2017.

Hon. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE ROYBAL-ALLARD: On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am

writing to endorse, the “Seniors Have Eyes, Ears and Teeth Act.” It is our hope that action will be taken on your legislation during the current 115th Congress.

The “Seniors Have Eyes, Ears and Teeth Act” would help millions of Medicare beneficiaries who need vision, hearing and dental care, which is not covered by Medicare. Paying for these services is a hardship for many Medicare beneficiaries, half of whom live on incomes below \$24,150 per year. Medicare households spend on average 15 percent of their income, over two times more than younger households, on Medicare cost sharing and for services not covered by Medicare.

Routine dental services are very important to the overall health of Medicare beneficiaries, and today, many Medicare beneficiaries suffer isolation and severe health problems because they cannot afford to pay for vision and hearing examinations or to buy eyeglasses or hearing aids. For these reasons, the National Committee’s current Legislative Agenda includes support for expanding Medicare benefits to cover vision, hearing and dental health services and equipment, which are important for healthy aging.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you to secure enactment of the “Seniors Have Eyes, Ears and Teeth Act,” which would improve the Medicare program for today’s seniors as well as future generations of beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

MAX RICHTMAN,
President and CEO.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, today I will reintroduce the WINGMAN Act, a vital veterans’ bill that will expedite the claims process for veterans who come to our congressional offices seeking assistance with their benefit claims. The current process leaves thousands of veterans and their families remaining in limbo awaiting resolution on their claims. The status quo is unacceptable, and it must change.

No servicemember should have to wait to receive benefits they have more than earned. This ends with the passage of the WINGMAN Act, which removes the middle man and allows staff to access these records directly, after obtaining a privacy release form without having to wait on the VA bureaucracy. I think if we just listen, this is about customer service. Yes, they are constituents, but they are also customers. Every Member of this Congress—all 535 Members—represents approximately 700,000 constituents, and I like to think that we are in the customer service business as is the VA, the Veterans Administration.

If we can’t service our customers, where else can they go?

Last Congress, WINGMAN passed this House unanimously. It passed the Veterans’ Affairs Committee unanimously, but it was held up by one Senator who thought he knew more than the 435 Members of this body and that he knew more than the Veterans’ Af-

fairs Committee. Fortunately, that Senator from Nevada is no longer here, and we are resubmitting this. I am hopeful that this Congress—the Members of this Chamber—will, once again, reform the veterans’ claims process and that our colleagues in the upper Chamber will as well.

Before I close, I would also like to take a moment to recognize Representatives RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, KYRSTEN SINEMA, and JOHN DELANEY for being coleads on this bill. All three of my colleagues have demonstrated their commitment to fighting for our veterans every day of every year that they have served in Congress.

We have right now right over 150 cosponsors of this bill, and it is a privilege to have their support. I thank them for helping to lead the charge to enact this change and others that are so desperately needed to better assist veterans and their families. Without their support, WINGMAN would not have the broad, bipartisan support that it does now. I urge the remainder of our colleagues to support WINGMAN as well. Let our Nation’s veterans know that we’ve got their six.

PROTECT THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CORREA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CORREA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to protect the Affordable Care Act. Today I urge you to give the Affordable Care Act the same chance we gave America’s other great healthcare program, Medicare, way back in 1965.

Today Medicare covers over 55 million Americans and is a staple for senior care. But let’s go back in time and remember what people were saying about Medicare in 1965. The American Medical Association said Medicare is an “invasion of the voluntary relationship between the patient and the physician.”

The then-Republican leadership said the bill will cost too much. It will never cover enough seniors. It will make taxes too high, and we will be broke within 2 years.

Those are some of the quotes from The New York Times in 1965.

Today, 52 years later, Medicare is one of the most efficient healthcare systems in our country. Why? Because we gave it a chance to flourish.

Mr. Speaker, when we come together on behalf of the American people, we get things done. I ask my colleagues today: Do not repeal the Affordable Care Act. Instead, let’s move past the politics of repealing the ACA. Let’s learn from five decades of Medicare. Let’s give Americans the healthcare coverage they want and they deserve, because in 60 years, it won’t really matter whose name is on the program. But what will matter is that we came together and stopped the repeal. What will matter is that we fixed the ACA and made it work for every American.

The American people deserve good health care. If folks have issues with the ACA, then let’s fix those issues. Let’s make the ACA better. But to rip coverage from 30 million people, to destroy 2.6 million jobs, and to add \$350 billion to our deficit is not a good thing.

I ask my colleagues today to keep the ACA.

CITIZEN LEGISLATORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the very first time in this Chamber as a servant of Pennsylvania’s Eighth District—the good people of Bucks and Montgomery Counties—serving as their independent voice. The weight of this responsibility should not be lost on any of us. It is my sincere hope that each one of us here—regardless of where we come from or what our past experiences have been or how long we have been here—will do what the American people are demanding of us at this time: to work together as problem-solvers, not work against each other as ideologues.

Our Founders envisioned citizen legislators chosen from their peers to work on their behalf and to serve honorably with a focus on solutions, and then return home and live under the laws they helped pass, making way for a new generation of leadership with new ideas and a fresh perspective. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we as a nation have strayed from that vision.

Today too many Americans feel left out. They see a system that does more to preserve the status quo than it does to solve our most pressing challenges. They see a class of career politicians and elite insiders. I wish I could tell my constituents—my bosses—that this problem is exaggerated and that this mess in Washington doesn’t affect them or their families or their businesses.

But as a former anticorruption FBI special agent, I have seen the brokenness in our system, and I know the real-life impact that it has, which is both soft and hard corruption that tilts the legislative agenda towards special interests, electoral complacency that allows lawmakers to focus on accumulating power rather than serving their constituents, and an entrenched partisanship that grinds the gears of government to a halt.

Mr. Speaker, this does not have to be the fate of this Congress. It does not. The 115th Congress can be remembered as the one that buried party labels for good and focused on fixing the system. To that end, I have introduced legislative proposals to begin that process: a constitutional amendment enacting term limits for all Members of Congress and a constitutional amendment preventing Members of Congress from being paid unless a budget is passed.